

Life of the Spirit

A BLACKFRIARS REVIEW



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Life of the Spirit

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INVOCATION TO THE DOVE¹

BEING THE INTRODUCTION
TO 'ART AND DIVINE GRACE'

BY

DOM CLEMENT JACOB²

THOU whom long ago I encountered in the course of my theological studies in an article by St Thomas, come now to my aid! Who has not at some time found the study of sacred science painful and comfortless? The deepening and widening of our knowledge of Truth is not always accompanied by a corresponding increase of joy. When I was studying for the priesthood I loved St Thomas; but it was a purely intellectual love, light without warmth, music without melody.

Then thou didst appear, O Dove of Sweetness, and I know that the hearts of Saints and Doctors are not devoid of poetry. A thousand miles from the dark mysticism of St John of the Cross thou didst reveal to me other forms of wisdom in equilibrium and clarity. Hidden in one of the responses of the *Ad Quartum*, as a dove in the hollow of a rock, thou taughtest me the meaning of choice and discretion and the true use of symbolism.

It is to thee, then, that I turn when I wish to recall the relationships, the conflicts and the union of art and divine grace. Thou livest by the waters and when the vulture appears, thou plunkest and escapest. May I too live by the life-giving waters of Holy Scripture and take refuge in them from the attacks of the devil.

After St Thomas's *Summa Theologica*.

Translated by Stephen Deacon. It is hoped to publish subsequently in LIFE OF THE SPIRIT some chapters of this very illuminating little book, 'L'Art et la Grace' (Les Editions Nouvelles: Paris) of which this is the introduction.

Prompted by instinct, or perhaps by intelligence, thou choosest the best grains for thy feeding. I too have need, as we all have, to choose the best thoughts for the nourishment of my mind.

But thou dost not think of thyself alone; thou nourishest thy fledglings of other birds as well. Oh, may the gift of Counsel inspire the artist, thy foster-child, and all who hear him. May he be as thou art, destroying nothing of the deposit of Faith, without bitterness, singing while he groans in his misery and finding joy in his lamentations.

But above all, thou who makest thy nest in the rocks, teach us to make our home in the wounds of Christ who is the one rock in which all our hope must abide.

Do thou then, living reality yet at the same time symbol of the gifts of the Holy Ghost in Baptism, not only recall to our minds the miraculous effects of a few drops of Holy Water on our foreheads, but remind us also that the artist and the Christian are not separate individuals. The Holy Ghost creates unity.

Una est colomba mea says the Song of Songs. When we read these words we think of the Church. Thou, little dove, lives in flocks and lovest to love. May this work undertaken under thy wing have these same virtues. We go before God without pretences, as simple as thou art who hast no guile; such is the advice of St Matthew; and your sweetness reminds us that we are free because our stains have been washed away by the healing waters.

There is no more to do now but to offer, as thou dost, the best of ourselves, the best of our efforts, of our work and our thoughts to our fellow-men and to seek our rest and our comfort in Love.

AN ENGLISH MARTYR ON THE JUBILEE
YEAR

A SERMON

BY

BL. PETER WRIGHT, S.J.

The Indulgences of the Holy Year are usually extended to the Universal Church after the closing of the Holy Doors. In 1650 there was such an extension till Easter Sunday, 1651, which fell on 30th March in England, but on 9th April in countries that had adopted the reformed calendar. The following sermon was written by Bl. Peter Wright, S.J., and exists in a volume of sermons, all in his own handwriting, at Stonyhurst. I gratefully acknowledge the kindness of Fr H. Chadwick, S.J., the Librarian, in allowing me to transcribe and publish it.

Bl. Peter Wright was born at Slipton in Northamptonshire of a Catholic yeoman family, lost his faith as a young man, and went to Holland to fight with the English Protestant regiment against the Spaniards, who then possessed half the Netherlands. He soon, however, deserted, was reconciled to the Church and became a Jesuit. He was appointed chaplain to the English regiment fighting on the side of the Spaniards. On the outbreak of the Civil War in England he returned with his regiment to fight for Charles I. After the King's defeat he became chaplain to the Marquis of Winchester at their London home.

This sermon breaks off in the middle of a sentence, and these were probably the last words he ever wrote, for he was surprised and arrested on 2nd February, 1651. He was taken to Newgate prison, where among his companions was Fr Thomas Middleton, *alias* Dade, the Dominican Superior. These two were arraigned together on the capital charge of being priests, and it is infinitely sad to record that the chief witness against them both was an apostate Dominican, Fr Thomas Gage, who belonged to an illustrious Catholic family. His Catholic relations got him to promise not to give evidence as to the priesthood of the two victims. With respect to Fr

Middleton he kept his word, testifying that although he was Superior of the Dominicans it did not follow that he was a priest, instancing St Francis, who was a Founder but not a priest. On this evidence Fr Middleton was acquitted. But when Fr Wright was brought to the bar, the apostate provided all the evidence required by the court, which was not much, and he was condemned to death. He suffered at Tyburn in the presence of a huge concourse of people on 19th May, 1651.

The sermon that he was never allowed to finish has had to wait three hundred years to see the light. I have modernised the spelling and corrected a few obvious slips. If the language is archaic, the matter is just as applicable to 1951 as it was to 1651, and it comes down to us with all the deep sincerity of one who was so soon to lay down his life for his Faith.

GODFREY ANSTRUTHER, O.P.



The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.—Is. 61, 1, 2.



THAT year must certainly be a year grateful unto our heavenly seedsman in which he sees the fruits of his Gospel to flourish and spring forth in the hearts of those in whom he has sown the same. The sower went forth to sow his seed. This heavenly seedsman went forth upon a certain time to sow his seed but a great part thereof fell upon such barren ground that it prospered not, for it was either eaten up by the fowls of the air, or it fell upon such dry ground that it took no root, or it was choked by thistles or weeds insomuch that the seedsman took no pleasure or content in any part thereof, but only in that which fell in good ground and brought forth thirty, sixty, yea an hundred fold. This heavenly seedsman intends this year to sow again his seed; he intends to play the careful husbandman and for three months together to cultivate the souls of his servants and to fertilise them with the fruits of Jubilee or plenary indulgences. To the end, therefore, that we may concur with this heavenly seedsman and bring forth fruit according to his desire, we will first explicate what a Jubilee is. Secondly who

ath power to grant the same. Last what disposition is required for obtaining thereof.

According to the learned Hebricians, the word *Jebul* from which the word Jubilee is derived, signifies in their language all sorts of fruits, so that, as well observes Cardinal Bellarmine (*Lib. I c. de Indulg.*) by a year of Jubilee is understood a springing year, profitable and fruitful, which with the Israelites was every fiftieth year. For as we read (Lev. c. 25 and 26; Num. c. 36), God out of his infinite goodness and mercy did so dispose that although there was every fiftieth year a general rest given to men, beasts and the earth, for no man did either sow or mow or cultivate his lands, yet there was all plenty of fruits and other provisions, for to the end there might be no want or scarcity during this year, God caused in the year before a triple increase to be of all sorts of commodities. He caused also all lands and houses which had been mortgaged or sold to be restored to their former owners, and all slaves and those who were kept in captivity or bondage to be set free and have their liberty. This fiftieth year of the Israelites' Jubilee was a true type of those plenary indulgences which Christians have under the law of grace. Wherefore Clement the sixth of that name, Pope of Rome, granting according to the ancient custom a plenary indulgence every fiftieth year to all those who should visit the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Rome did most fitly and deservedly call a year of Jubilee. For as in the Hebrews' Jubilee the fruits of the earth were given by Almighty God to men without cost for their own labour, and the possession of lands were restored to their owners and liberty to men in thralldom, so in this Christian Jubilee year the merits of Christ and his saints are freely granted unto us to satisfy that temporal pain which should have been inflicted upon us by reason of our sins committed. It frees us from the servitude of the devil, restores unto us our right to the kingdom of heaven, and puts us in possession of celestial benefits. For albeit it be true that indulgences do not remit the guilt of sins but the temporal pain which is due unto them, yet men, to the end they may obtain the remission of such pains are excited to such sincere and general confessions, to such acts of contrition, to such works of mercy, that they may be truly said to obtain for man all these admirable effects of comfort and

glory. To give, therefore, a true definition of what an indulgence is, I will use that which the learned divine, Gregory de Valentia, sets down. (*Tom. 4 dis 7 Q. 20 punc 2.*) An Indulgence, saith he, is a merciful relaxation or absolution of temporal punishment due to sin, by applying out of the Sacrament the superabundant satisfactions of Christ and his saints, by him that hath lawful authority.

Concerning the first, namely that a sin may be pardoned and yet a punishment remain, it is manifest by divers examples recorded in holy Scripture. We find (2 Kings c. 12) that the prophet David being told by the prophet Nathan of his two crying sins of murder and adultery, the prophet David presently cast himself, if I may say so, at the feet of God's mercy and with brinish tears breaking forth into these words *Miserere mei Deus* did humbly beg pardon for the same. God seeing his penitent heart bid the prophet Nathan tell him that our Lord had pardoned his sin. Notwithstanding in that chapter he told him, because thou hast made the enemies of our Lord to blaspheme, therefore thy son which is born to thee shall die the death, by which we see the guilt of the sin pardoned, but the punishment still to remain, namely the death of David's child. God pardoned at the intercession of Moses the crime of idolatry the Jews committed in adoring the golden calf. Nevertheless he said: I will visit this their sin in the day of revenge. (*Exod. c. 32, v. 34.*) God pardoned the sister of Moses and received her into his favour and notwithstanding he punished her with seven days leprosy. (*Num. c. 12, v. 15.*) And not to be overlong in particular examples, all mankind findeth the bitter scourge and calamity of sin, as hunger, cold, thirst, sickness and death, the just imposed penances of our forefathers' transgressions. Notwithstanding we know many have had the guiltiness thereof cleansed by the Sacrament of Baptism. Wherefore, St Augustine saith excellently well, the punishment is more prolonged than the fault, lest the fault may be little accounted of, if the punishment ended with it. (*Tract. 124 in Joan.*)

But some may object and say, Christ hath wrought for us a plentiful redemption, this is, hath satisfied and discharged us of whatsoever we have deserved to suffer for sin. This is an objection which heretics have continually in their mouths, to

which I answer that it's true Christ hath fully and superabundantly satisfied the wrath of his Father for all the sins and transgressions of man, and infinite more if they had been possible, for he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world—he who is our propitiation and by whose stripes we are healed. Yet as it hath pleased his divine Majesty, by faith, hope and charity and by the sacraments of the Church to grant unto us the inestimable benefits of his sanctifying grace, without these it is impossible to obtain it; for although our Saviour hath suffered never so much for us, yet without faith it is impossible to please God, and again if I have faith sufficient to move mountains, if I have no charity I am like a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; so he hath ordained by our penal works to apply unto us for sins voluntarily committed after baptism the precious fruits of his bountiful and abundant satisfaction. For as it is certain that our Blessed Saviour, by his prayers obtained of his heavenly Father all the gifts and graces which are bestowed upon men, yet he commanded us to ask and pray, and by prayer to obtain the selfsame things, which he before by his prayers procured. So although he hath perfectly satisfied for all our offences, yet he requires some satisfaction at our hands for the injury we have done to his divine Majesty by our sins and trespasses. Which St Basil, that great Doctor, doth excellently declare when he saith (*Interrog. 12 in Reg. brevior*): Albeit God in his only begotten Son as much as lieth in him hath granted remission of sins to all, yet because mercy and judgement are joined together by the prophet, and he witnesseth God to be most merciful and just, it is necessary that things which are spoken of penance by the prophets and Apostles be performed by us, that the judgements of God's justice may appear, and his mercy consummated to the condonation of sins. (Ps. 100.) For as St Gregory Nazian saith (*Orat. in S. Lumina*): It is a like evil remission without chastisement and chastisement without pardon, for the one letteth go the reins too far, the other refraineth them too much. Wherefore, that God may carry over us an even hand, and his clemency may be mingled with some severity, his justice and mercy met together, although he always of mercy pardoneth the iniquity of repentant sinners, yet he often bindeth them over to some justice, and this is the

cause that sometimes God pardons the offence, and yet punisheth the offender with some temporal punishment, either in this world or in purgatory. Yet it may happen, though it be a thing rare, that a man's sorrow may be so great and his contrition so admirable that he shall not only obtain pardon for them and for their eternal punishment, but for their temporal punishment also, as appears by the example of St Peter, St Mary Magdalen, the publican, the thief upon the Cross, the adulterous woman and divers others.

I come to the second point wherein I am to show there remains in the Church a surplusage or common treasure of public satisfaction. It's a thing most certain, every action of our Blessed Saviour was of infinite value, and as Clement the sixth doth define, every the least drop of his precious blood was sufficient to have satisfied for all the sins of mankind, which if this be so, if the least drop of his blood was of such infinite value, what a great price, what a copious redemption, what an inestimable ransom did he offer, which did not only preach, labour, sweat and suffer for us unspeakable injuries and affronts, but shed all his precious blood to redeem us. O this was a price surpassing all prices, a ransom which as much exceeds the sum of our iniquity as the main ocean surmounts a little spark of fire cast into it. Likewise our Blessed Lady, who was never stained with the stain of original sin, who was replenished with fountains of grace, who went daily forward increasing in many charitable and painful works, had doubtless a rich heap of satisfaction to augment the sum before mentioned. St John Baptist, the apostles, sundry other martyrs and other holy persons have abounded with the like, especially St Paul who writeth thus (Col. c. 1, v. 24): I accomplish those things which want of the passion of Christ in my flesh, for his body which is the Church. And what was this which was wanting in the sufferings of Christ? Was there any defect in his passion? No, certainly, no: it was not for this. For what was it, then? It was as the word enfaceth, to fulfil the plenitude of Christ and his members' passions for the benefit of the Church, and likewise of others to whom they be communicated. For as Christ our Lord with all his elect make one mystical, common and public body, so his sufferings with the afflictions of his members concur to make up one common and public weal, one

general and public treasure.

Touching the third point, to wit, that this common treasure of penal afflictions is dispensable unto others by them to whom God hath committed the government of his Church is likewise plain by those words of Christ to St Peter (Mat. 16, v. 19): Whatsoever thou shalt loose in earth it shall be loosed in heaven, which being generally spoken without restriction are not only to be expounded of all spiritual power to forgive sins in the holy Sacraments by the application of Christ's merits, but also out of the Sacraments to release the punishment due unto the same by dispensing his own and saints' satisfactions. Thus St Paul as we read (II Cor. 2). granted an indulgence to the incestuous Corinthian of his deserved punishment, whom by the intercession (as Theodoret and St Thomas writing upon his place) of Timothy and Titus [he] pardoned in the person of Christ. Thus, the bishops of the primitive Church gave many pardons and indulgences to sundry penitents by the mediation of Confessors or designed Martyrs, of which St Cyprian (Ep. 13, 14, 15) and Tertullian (*lib. ad martyres*) make mention. Thus also the Council of Nice appointed mercy and indulgences to be used to such as perfectly repented, whereas others should perform and expect the whole time of their penance. Nay, that indulgences and pardons should be dispensed of, of the public treasure of the Church is most conformable to God's justice, answerable to the Communion of saints, which we profess in our Creed, agreeable to the mutual intercourse between members of the same body, that the wants of one be supplied by the store of others, and that there be, as I say, a communication of benefits, not only of the head to the members, but also of one member to the rest of his fellow members. After which manner not only the chief magistrates and stewards of God's house to whom he hath given commission to dispense his mysteries, but every particular man may by special intention apply his satisfactory works, as his fastings, almsdeeds, prayers, watchings, etc. to others who stand in need hereof. So St Paul offered his afflictions (II Cor, 1, 6) one while for the Corinthians, (Col. 1, 24) another while for the Colossians; (Rom. 9, 3) now he desired to die for the Romans, then to be anathema, that is a sacrifice, as Origen expounds it, for the Jews. For this cause he exhorts the Corinthians to con-

tribute largely to the poor of Jerusalem, saying: Let in this present time your abundance supply their want, and their abundance supply your want (II Cor. 8, 14), that is to say, communicate you now unto them the superfluity of your worldly wealth, that you may interchangeably receive from them the supererogation of their spiritual good deeds. In fine King David acknowledgeth most plainly and clearly this mutual communication of which I now speak, where he saith: I am made partaker of all that fear our Lord (Ps. 118), and speaking of the Church, which he calls Jerusalem, he saith it is built as a city whose participation is in itself (Ps. 121, 3), that is, as in a politic commonwealth or public city there is a general traffic for the general good of all and every particular man's necessity, so in the Church or City of God there is a participation or communion of spiritual works of all to one end, to one public benefit and to the behoof of every private person. In our natural bodies one member speaketh in the behalf of another. The foot is trod on and the tongue crieth, why dost thou hurt me? The eye seeth, but it seeth not to itself alone; it seeth to the head, it seeth to the hand, it seeth to the foot, it seeth to the rest of the members. The hands only work and the feet only walk, but neither the hands or feet walk or work for themselves alone, but the hands work for the members of the body and the feet walk for them. So in this mystical body of the Church which St Paul compares to a natural body (I Cor. 12), one member may suffer for another, one member satisfy for another, one member communicate his good works to another. Much more the Catholic Church may do it, who is so plentifully stored with our Saviour's and his Saints' satisfactions.

But some may, out of the prophet Ezechiel (18, 20), object: the soul which sinneth even that shall die, and out of St Paul (Gal. 1): Everyone shall bear his own burden. I answer, there is no question but the soul which sins mortally of which Ezechiel speaks, incurs, without sorrow and repentance, death eternal, for as we shall show, that soul which is in mortal sin is incapable of pardon or indulgences so long as it remains in that miserable state. And there is no question but everyone shall bear his own burden, by way of merit or demerit, although he be helped by others by way of satisfaction, for no man can

merit or demerit for another, for to merit or demerit is to do some thing or action, with desiring to bring the party which doth it either praise or dispraise, reward or punishment. For example, if a Captain goes upon a piece of service to which he had no obligation, but merely to supply the place of his friend; if such a Captain performs that place with courage and resolution and doth bravely dare and put to flight his enemies, the praise of that action must be ascribed to him. He hath merited it, this is deserved it, and it cannot be given to the other Captain who was not there, neither in his advice or person. Nevertheless that Captain who performed the service may satisfy the obligation the other had to go upon that exploit, or oftentimes it happens that if the service be done, it imports not by whom it's performed. Yea, many times the party that had the obligation to have done the service is hindered by sickness or some other casualty, and the King is well satisfied with the service of his friend. So albeit we cannot merit for another, that is, by our works deserve that another be freed from the guilt of sin, or be put into possession of the joys of heaven (for as St Paul saith: What things a man sows, that shall he also reap, for he that soweth in his flesh, of his flesh shall reap corruption, but he that soweth in the spirit shall reap everlasting life. St Matthew saith: The son of man will render to everyone according to his works. It must be man's own works, man's own good deeds dignified with the grace of God inhering in his soul, which must merit for him reward in heaven). Notwithstanding, as I have already showed, being there is a surplusage of satisfactions in the Catholic Church, and being, as I have proved, out of the Communion of Saints and divers other places of holy Scriptures, that this may be applied for those who stand in need thereof, there is no doubt then but that the Holy Church out of its general treasure, or any good man out of his particular charity, may apply his satisfactory works for the satisfying of that temporal penalty which is due to the sins of others.

We have seen by this which we have now said what a jubilee is: we have seen it remains in the treasure of the Church, and that he whom God hath appointed to rule his Church, to wit the Pope of Rome, Christ's Vicar upon earth, hath power to grant the same. Now let's show what disposition

is required in those who are to gain it, which, that I may better do I will read unto you the copy of a Bull or Breve found in the tomb of Sir Gerard Braybrook, Knight, in St Paul Church in London in the year of Our Lord 1608 and sixth year of King James, by the sexton of that Church, who digging a grave, light by chance upon the coffin of the said Sir Gerard who had been buried there two hundred years before and notwithstanding found the cads of the coffin whole, the flowers strewed upon it fresh and sweet and the charter of pardon not consumed or eaten or defaced in so long a time. God did thus miraculously conserve them to show plainly how much he doth approve this doctrine of Indulgences, which being translated verbatim in English was this:

Boniface Bishop, Servant of the Servants of God, to his beloved son the noble gentleman Gerard Braybrook, the younger, Knight, and to his beloved daughter in Christ, the noble lady his wife Elizabeth, of the diocese of Lincoln, salutation and apostolic benediction. It proceedeth from your affection, [and] devotion, with which you reverence us and the Church of Rome, that we admit your petitions to a favourable hearing, especially those which concern the salvation of your souls. For this cause, we, being moved to yield to your supplications, by the tenor of these presents do grant this Indulgence to your devotion, that such a ghostly father as either of you shall choose shall have power, by apostolic authority, to grant to you persisting in the sincerity of Faith, in the Unity of the Holy Church of Rome, and in obedience and devotion towards us or our successors, Popes of Rome, full remission only once at the point of death of all your sins whereof you shall be contrite and confessed, in such manner nevertheless that in those cases where satisfaction is to be made to any other, the same Confessor shall enjoin you to do it by yourselves if you survive, or by your heirs if you shall then die which you and they ought to perform as aforesaid, and lest, (which God forbid) you should by this favour become more prone to commit unlawful things hereafter, we declare that if upon confidence of this remission or indulgence you shall commit any such sins, that this present pardon shall not be any help to you concerning them, etc.¹

¹ Dugdale, in his *History of St Paul's* (ed. 1818, p. 32) refers to the finding of the

By this Charter we see four things necessary to obtain an indulgence. First to persist in the sincerity of faith; secondly, to be sorrowful, contrite and confess our sins; thirdly, to make satisfaction or restitution if any be needful; fourthly, not to resume hereby to commit unlawful things. These are the four things as necessary dispositions to gain an indulgence or Jubilee. For as for the first, namely that it's necessary to be in the true faith, this must be, for as no branch can receive nurriture from its tree no longer than it remains in the tree; nor a brook water from a fountain from whence it proceeds, if it be once cut off from that fountain, or a member from any part of a man's body if it be once disjoined and taken from his body, or a subject from a kingdom, commonwealth or corporation, if for his misdemeanours he be expelled and cast out thereof: so cannot one who by reason of his heresy or want of true faith, be cut out of this vine, this fountain, this body, this Communion of Saints which is found in the Holy Catholic Church. He is to be held for an outcast, or to use the phrase of holy Scripture for an heathen or publican, nor participates anything of the merits of Christ or his satisfactions. For there is no reason our blessed Saviour should communicate these favours or privileges unto him, sith that by his heresy he gives him the lie, he believes not what he saith or hath taught in his gospel, but followeth his own private dictances and judgement, not relying upon anything which our Saviour's spouse, the Holy Catholic Church, doth teach or interpret, wherefore it's no marvel the apostle saith that without Faith it's impossible to please God. The second condition is that we be sorrowful, contrite and confess our sins, for without this there is no indulgence to be obtained, no pardon to be had. The reason whereof is most clear, for since as I have before declared an indulgence doth only bring remission for the temporal punishment due to a sin forgiven, it is necessary that the sin be forgiven, for it's contrary to all sense and reason that a punishment or penalty should be forgiven him that persists in his fault, or that God

ones of Sir Gerard Braybrook (who died in 1429) and prints this indulgence in Latin. A letter of 1608, however, in the archives of Westminster Cathedral states that the body was incorrupt. In the Fire of London in 1666, falling masonry crashed through the tomb of Sir Gerard's uncle, Robert Braybrook, bishop of London, who died in 1404, and *his* body was found incorrupt.

should bestow any so special a favour as is the forgiveness of a punishment upon him who remains yet his enemy: out of which consideration proceeds that which I said in the beginning, to wit, so many strange conversions from sin unto Almighty God, so many admirable and sincere confessions, so many heroic acts of virtue and devotion; in a word, that the year is a year truly pleasing and grateful to Almighty God, for men reflecting upon the number of their sins, and the grievous penalties inflicted upon sinners, even in this life for the same: for according to the ancient Canons of the Church sinners were enjoined by their Confessarius sometimes ten, sometimes twelve, sometimes thirty years, yea, sometimes to remain the whole remnant of their life in mourning and penance if their sins were enormous and great: and for lesser mortal sins a forty days or another Lent's fast or else they were to suffer for it in Purgatory which was an incomparable greater punishment. Reflecting upon this and knowing they may by this happy Jubilee, if they do by confessions put themselves in the state of grace, procure a *Quietus est*² or an absolute freedom from all these penances both in this life and hereafter. They cry out: this is the acceptable time, this the day of salvation. Whereupon severely examining their consciences endeavour to find out all that wherein they may any ways [have] offended Almighty God, or injured their neighbours. Which being done they cast themselves with contrition of heart at the feet of some lawful and approved priest with a resolution to make satisfaction where any satisfaction is due to a third person, and because true penance is to bewail things committed, and not to commit things hereafter to be bewailed, they make firm purposes by the assistance of God's grace not to offend his divine Majesty. And thus we see how easily we may gain this plenary indulgence or remission from all temporal punishment due for our sins. Here is not required much moneys or expensive labours or toils or penances: all that's required is these three little things which I have now touched, and some little thing expressed in the Breve or Bull by which the indulgence is granted. This which is required for gaining this present indulgence is (*The sermon breaks off thus abruptly.*)

² a legal term for an acquittance.

THE DIVORCE OF MYSTICISM FROM THEOLOGY—II

BY

F. VANDENBROUCKE, O.S.B.*

THE Rhenish school drew into its orbit many of the contemplatives of the time.¹ They were not of the stature of their predecessors. The sole exception to this mediocrity was of course Bl. John Ruysbroeck (†1381). This great mystic of Groenendael depends in more than one point on Master Eckhart, but he has been careful not to leave any ambiguity on his 'dualist' thought, that is, on his doctrine of the distinction between God and the creature. The *Book of Supreme Truth* (*Dat boec der hoechster waerheit*) has expressly stated this: 'no creature can be or become holy on the point of losing its created nature and becoming God'.² Certain expressions of Book III of the *Spiritual Nuptials* (*De geestelyke brulocht*) did however give rise to the criticisms of Gerson.³

Ruysbroeck's mystical teaching explains, then, in what measure man can arrive at union with God. At the beginning of his career as a writer, he admitted the possibility of the intuitive vision of the divine essence.⁴ Later he seems to have

*Translated, by kind permission of the Editor, from *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, April, 1950, pp. 373-389, by K. Pond.

See in this connection *Dict. Spirit.* vol. I. 324-325; W. Preger, *Geschichte der deutschen mystik*, Leipzig, 1874-1892, vol. II. pp. 3-306. In particular, Rulman Herswin (†1382; cf. W. Preger, *op. cit.* vol. III, pp. 245-407); the 'Friends of God' (cf. *Dict. Spirit.* vol. I. 493-500). In the fifteenth century one again comes across the influence of the Rhenish school in Nicholas of Cusa (†1464), who has remained famous for his attraction for the traditional Dionysian darkness and for his denial of a necessary knowledge antecedent to or concomitant with contemplation. Another example is Henry Herp (see further on in this article).
Ruysbroec-Genootschap III, 276-277. cf. P. A. Van de Walle, *Is Ruysbroec pantheistic?* in *Ons Geestelijk Erf*, vol. XII, 1938, pp. 359-391; vol. XIII, 1939, pp. 65-105.

P. A. Van der Walle, *art. cit.*; A. Combes, *Essai sur la critique de Ruysbroeck et Gerson*, vols. I and II, published Paris 1945 and 1948. M. d'Asbeck (*La mystique de Ruysbroeck l'Admirable. Un écho du néo-platonisme au XIV^e siècle*, Paris, 1930, p. 287) exaggerates to the utmost the contrast between Ruysbroeck's experience and dogma.

cf. *Spiritual Nuptials*, 3, 6.

been more reserved, as in the treatise on the Burning Rock (chapter 2). This treatise summarises the first two books of the *Spiritual Nuptials* in chapters 1 to 9, and in the following chapters sets out in detail the third book which is devoted to contemplation properly so termed. It has been supposed that this detailed exposition was a result of the discussions which, about 1330-36, centred on the face-to-face, immediate vision of God by the elect, discussions which ceased on the intervention of Benedict XII.⁵

As to Ruysbroeck's essential mystical teaching, three essential elements may be distinguished in it: exemplarism, introversion, and the life of union—elements which are traditional, but brought together here in an original synthesis.

At the root of exemplarism is Trinitarian doctrine. The divine life is a movement of flux and reflux, of expansion and contraction, proceeding from the unity of nature, whence proceed the three Persons, to return to unity in a common fruition. The eternal life of the creature, in the exemplary ideas, participates in this flux and reflux.⁶ Even the structure of the soul is framed upon the divine model, for, according to Augustine, its three higher faculties, memory, intellect, will, derive their natural origin from the unity of the vital principle. And this unity, like the 'unity as to essence' which man possesses in God, and like the 'unity of the lower powers', must be 'possessed supernaturally'.⁷ This is the work of man who goes down into the depths of himself by passing through the three stages described in the *Spiritual Nuptials*: *werkend leven*, *God-begeerend leven* and *God-schouwend leven* (active life, desire for God, contemplation of God). Man thus discovers the image of God in the depths of his soul and associates himself with the life of the three divine Persons (one is reminded of Eckhart), until he attains, at the summit of contemplation, to the 'union without difference' with the divine essence, to 'possession'. This is the 'common life' which cannot be 'without exercise of love', and through which the human soul is drawn into the life of the Trinity itself.

5 Constitution *Benedictus Deus* of January 29th, 1336 (Denzinger-Bannwart, no. 530).

6 e.g. *The Book of the Twelve Bequines*, 28; *Spiritual Nuptials*, 3, 5; *Mirror of Eternal Salvation*, 17.

7 *Spiritual Nuptials*, 2.

Contemplation, then, for Ruysbroeck, as for the other writers of the Rhenish school, constitutes the highest point of an experience, the description of which is closely linked with dogmatic ideas. This is unquestionably speculative mysticism, but less intellectual in its procedure, as in its term, than that of Eckhart. Again, Ruysbroeck differs from Eckhart, and above all from Tauler, in the lesser importance assigned to 'technical processes of self-stripping'. He approximates to Suso in his concern for moulding a very rich personal experience to the terms of a speculative school of spirituality.⁸

Ruysbroeck's disciples at Groenendael were far from possessing their master's boldness. One of the most outstanding among them is John de Leeuwen (†1378). He seems to have clarified his master's thought. His treatise on 'What a man poor in spirit understands' distinguishes, like Ruysbroeck, active life, interior life (rather than the life of the desire for God), and the life of contemplation of God, but he adds to this threefold life that of abandonment, the total surrender of self to God.⁹ Fr L. Reypens, comparing the texts of Leeuwen with those of Ruysbroeck, concludes that 'for Leeuwen the highest mystical life is clearer, verbally, than in the case of Ruysbroeck: the summit is the true contemplation of God'. It does seem that here immediate contemplation, under the primacy of love, is in question, although such accuracy of expression is absent from the thought of the writers of that period.

As to the primacy of love, this disciple, who has simplified and clarified his master, here yields to the tendency of his time. The fact will be still more striking in another of Groenendael's spiritual writers, John of Schoonhoven (†1432), who obviously prefers the lower regions of asceticism to speculative mysticism. And in his conception of contemplation its humble and affective character supplants the dogmatic, theological or

We should add that besides this central conception of contemplation, Ruysbroeck does know the corporal mystical phenomena. The second book of the *Spiritual Ladder* (*bcgeerend leven*) places them in the course of the first phase of this stage; they are the experiences in *den geest* (=in the spirit: revelations, intellectual visions); *boven zichzelf* and *boven den geest* (=above oneself, and above the spirit), although not absolutely out of oneself (rapture); and *boven zichzelf* (=above oneself: sudden illuminations, the work of God himself); cf. 2, 24.

This division closely corresponds to that which Fr St Axters, O.P., has suggested for the publication of an anthology of his works: Moral life, spiritual life, divine life.

intellectual tendencies of the Rhinelanders and of Ruysbroeck. The influence of the *Devotio moderna* is clear.

Thus the fourteenth century draws to its close as the Rhenish and Groenendael schools make what are perhaps the most daring efforts as yet attempted to unite theology and mysticism. But in these same closing years of the century a weariness, a disappointment, a scepticism can already be discerned. Neither the reality of contemplation nor its demands are questioned. But whether it is found at the end of these technical processes of self-stripping and these intellectual ascents is questioned. Its repercussions on the soul make more impression.¹⁰ There is mistrust of speculations on the Word being born in the soul and on the latter's return into the divine nothingness. There is surprise that contemplation should be confined to an élite enjoying the facilities of a strictly 'contemplative' state of life. Moreover the possibility of the direct vision of God is more and more questioned, and the gratuitous aspect of contemplation insisted upon. Is not love the essence of the Gospel? Were not the old monastic schools and the French school nearer to the truth when they made contemplation consist in a formal act of love? And when they made this derive from meditation on Christ?

The fifteenth century, finally, will draw the full consequences from the primacy of love in contemplation, and it is the chief merit of a movement originating in the Low Countries, the *Devotio Moderna*, to have brought mystical life down again, even in its theoretical exposition, to the level of all. Moral and ascetical life, the love of God in concrete terms, returns to the foreground. This 'moralistic' tendency is found to some extent everywhere. There is also found a kind of passage from the 'objective' in contemplation (God, Trinity, Christ, grace . . .) to the 'subjective', to the 'psychological' (love, consolation, virtues . . .). This other tendency is also found very frequently. Such movements do not yet lead to psychological syntheses of the mystical life like those of the sixteenth century in Spain. But we are on the way.

The causes of this movement are many. The speculative schools and Groenendael no longer provide men of outstand-

¹⁰ This is sufficiently clear in England with Julian of Norwich (+1412) and Margery Kempe (+1438), and in Switzerland with St Nicholas of Flue (+1487).

importance comparable with those who lent them distinction during the preceding centuries. Nominalism discredits the operations of reason, even when enlightened by faith; the ordinariness of theological discussions, the abandonment of rigorous metaphysical speculation lead to the same discredit; and the latter reacts upon the endeavours of speculative mysticism. The religious decadence of the fifteenth century calls for a movement of reform; hence the emphasis on moral and ascetic interests. The new-born humanism directs man's attention to man himself. But at the same time this humanism turns back towards the ancient sources, both pagan and Christian. This return to the ancients is very marked in the case of certain mystics as, for instance, Gerson, Denys the Carthusian, and even in the religious philosophy of a Marsilio Ficino.

As a result of this situation, the fifteenth century has a more modest conception of contemplation than the speculatives of the fourteenth—an attitude which is not without grave consequences for the future. It has to be admitted that it is at this precise moment that the division between theology and the mystical life occurs and that henceforward this separation will be irredeemable.¹¹ To quote only one example, the *Imitation* warns its readers against the dangers of knowledge—and it is right in attacking the abuses of a scholasticism which is intemperate to the point of losing the power to verify its own findings. Those scathing pages were directly aimed at the theologians. It is not surprising that in their eyes the *Imitation* becomes the type of a new literary *genre*, the 'book of devotion'. And such literature 'dogmatically is no longer of any importance'.

Numerous antecedents of the *ama nesciri* and *Quid prodest magna cavillatio de occultis et obscuris rebus, de quibus nec arguemur in iudicio* can unquestionably be found. Did not St Thomas himself realise, after the ecstasy of December 6th, 1273, that his great speculative effort was only straw in comparison with the vision of God? *Quid curae nobis de generibus et speciebus?* It might be the echo of a St Peter Damian. . . .

Nearer to the fifteenth century the most marked accents of this attitude of disillusionment break out first of all in England.

cf. M.-J. Congar, O.P., art. *Théologie*, *Dict. Théol. Cath.* vol. XV, col. 411-13. 3-4. The division between scholastic theology and mystical theology occurred particularly from the fifteenth century'.

The *Fire of Love* and *Form of Perfect Living* of Richard Rolle (†1349) ignore scholasticism or even, one might say simply, all abstract theories. Is not God unknowable? Is not the contemplation of him necessarily obscure? And is not its essential part equivalent to love, and concretely to the love of Christ? And when Rolle sets out to describe contemplation he can only find analogous psychological experiences to bring forward: interior fire (*calor*), song (*canor*), rapture (*raptus*), sweetness (*dulcor*).

In the anonymous *Cloud of Unknowing* (c. 1350-1370) the descriptions are still further stripped of scholastic vanities.¹² This admirable treatise, perhaps the most beautiful of the whole fourteenth century, is Dionysian down to its title (this is taken from the *Theologia Mystica*). 'Apophatism' there reigns supreme: 'Love alone can attain to God in this life, but not knowledge'. And to reach the one object of contemplation, this 'cloud of unknowing' which is God, there is only one way: the 'cloud of forgetting' of creatures, a cloud which love alone will pierce, like a bold arrow, in a stark and naked flight. Truly, the vain chatterers merely deserve good-natured contempt.

Another Englishman, Walter Hilton (†1396), to counteract the more or less non-conformist tendency of his predecessors, attempted a didactic treatise on the spiritual life. The *Scale of Perfection* deals with the right means of attaining perfection. Now the latter consists in the love of God, which is consummated in perfect contemplation—a double equation from which it follows that contemplation is none other than 'a love of God so full of sweetness, of delight and of fervour that [the soul] is rapt out of itself. At this moment at any rate it becomes one thing with God, it is transformed into the image of the Trinity.' And Hilton expresses the psychological tendency of his school when he distinctly compares this union to that of marriage

¹² *Cloud*, ch. 8. One is particularly struck by the *Cloud's* esteem for certain techniques of contemplation, such as the repetition of a simple word: *God, sin, love*. The purpose of such repetition is to pierce the 'cloud of unknowing'. There is a certain analogy between this process and the 'aspirations' recommended by Hugh of Balma in the thirteenth century, and by Henry Herp in the fifteenth. St Ignatius of Loyola did not despise such artifices (see M. Olphe-Gaillard, S.J., *De l'usage et de l'utilité des méthodes contemplatives dans le catholicisme*, in *Et. Carmélitaines*, 1949 *Technique et contemplation*, pp. 69-76). It is superfluous to stress the connection of this process with that of orthodox hesychasm, from the eleventh to the fourteenth century (see A. Bloom, *ibid.*, p. 49-67).

Scale 1, 8) and when he describes its preparatory stages as a light which is not without some light and which brings us near 'the true day' (Scale 2, 24). Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross are here foreshadowed.

But it is chiefly on the continent that the moralising and psychological tidal wave is to break. There, from the end of the fourteenth until the sixteenth century, spiritual life is dominated by the *Devotio Moderna*. The founder of this movement, Gerard Groote, died prematurely in 1384. His forceful personality gave a vigorous impulse of renewal to the religious life of the Low Countries. He did not indeed completely deny the earlier tendencies. He and his disciples are not without certain doctrinal connections with the Rhenish school or with Groenendaël. They gladly diffuse the type of *luscious Meditations* on the life of Jesus or on other religious subjects, a type already known in the previous century and sponsored, incorrectly indeed, by the name of St Bonaventure. They will also produce preachers of merit, animated by a genuine zeal for the revival of the decadent Church of these Middle Ages in decline.

Before all else they were spiritual writers. Gerard Groote himself has left a considerable number of autobiographical, oratorical, epistolary and ascetical works, in which the characteristics of his spiritual temperament can be discerned: a certain practical voluntarism, an anthropocentrism based on solicitude for eternal salvation, a certain pessimism as dissatisfied with existing forms of religious life as it is with marriage, a reaction against the pantheistic forms of false mysticism which are spread to some extent more or less everywhere. All this cannot but inspire him with mistrust for the speculative mysticism of Groenendaël and others. Is contemplation to be identified with clarity? always the same refrain: *contemplatio seu perfeccio veritatis* (Epist. 45). It would seem that he finds any more exact definition superfluous. The one thing which is important to remember is the preliminary and serious self-stripping, the *spiritualis paupertas* (Epist. 71) and the *imitacio humanitatis Christi*, the mode of access *ad divinitatem per contemplacionem* (Epist. 9). (Another mode of access, parallel to contemplation, is the active life: at the close of the century this sort of equivalence between the two lives, contemplative and active, against

which Rolle, for instance, was protesting vigorously half a century earlier is regarded as self-evident.)

In his dominant ideas, Gerard Groote was followed by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen (†1398; more systematic than Groote in the technique of meditation), Gerlac Peters (†1411), and Thomas à Kempis (†1471). The latter deserves particular mention by reason of the extraordinary influence which the four small treatises put together under the name of *De imitatione Christi* (a title inspired by the opening words of the first treatise) exerted. Thomas à Kempis, as there is more than one proof, was certainly not an extremely original mind. This suggests a certain reserve in attributing to him the entire authorship of the *Imitatio*. Whatever may be the truth or otherwise of this question, he can be considered as its final editor.¹³

In the work which is unquestionably Thomas's and in the *Imitatio*, tendencies rather similar to those instanced in the earlier authors have been found: affective devotion and contemplation of Christ's humanity, in order to attain to that of his divinity and to union with God in liberation of the soul. This is particularly evident in the second book of the *Imitatio*: paradoxical as it may seem, in the teaching of the *Imitatio*, the theme of the imitation of Christ thus appears rather infrequently, relatively speaking. Neither in the *Imitatio* nor in his other works does Thomas seem to admit the possibility of a transitory vision of the divine essence here on earth. The contemplation of certain privileged souls is a lower kind of vision only, different from the vision of the blessed, not only by its period of duration but by its nature: it only takes place *ex latere, modice, obscure*.¹⁴ One senses an anxiety to present the spiritual life in such of its aspects as are accessible to all Christians. Thus for practical purposes contemplation is identified with charity. Yet Thomas knows and describes, for instance in the *De elevatione mentis*, the mystical vision of divine truth, but through the intervention of a special grace.

¹³ We do not intend to enter into the endless discussions as to the authorship of the *Imitatio*. It is recognised that the latest theory on this subject is that of Fr J. Van Ginneken, S.J., who traces the origins of the *Imitatio* back to Gerard Groote himself, and considers Thomas as its editor, or simply its final compiler.

¹⁴ cf. G. Clamens, *La dévotion à l'humanité du Christ dans la spiritualité de Thomas à Kempis*. Lyon, 1931.

In a word, the *Imitatio* would seem to sum up certain tendencies of spirituality during the first half of the fifteenth century. And for many future generations it will remain the nearest and simplest expression of the *Devotio Moderna*.

Thus the movement appears under a rather favourable light. It was admittedly under suspicion, as early as Gerard Groote, on reason of certain links with the heterodox mysticism of the fourteenth century. Later its influence on the dawning humanism of the fifteenth, and on the Reformation of the sixteenth century was also regarded with suspicion. The esteem with which Luther, and possibly that with which Wessel Gansfort and Erasmus regarded it, would perhaps justify this severe judgment. Moreover the Church urgently needed new blood, and a spiritual and interior renewal. And after the speculative excesses of the thirteenth and particularly of the fourteenth century in spiritual matters, the return to the absolute primacy of charity, the return to concrete conformity to the life of Christ, the return to the interior virtues (humility, detachment . . .): all this was in itself a sane and healthy reaction. Matters developed as if the profound mind of the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, had discerned the danger of an exaggerated intellectualism and that of a too highly developed 'technicisation' of the soul's interior ascent.

And yet one cannot but recognise what this sane reaction has cost. The widening gap between decadent scholasticism and the new masters of the mystical life will become the gap between theology and mysticism in themselves. To no avail will Denys the Carthusian (†1471), with his immense erudition, search among the Fathers for the bases of the *Theologia mystica*, seek to be the disciple of another Denys, the Areopagite, and strive to link up the Dionysian *via negationis* and 'darkness' with the formal primacy of the intellect of which St Thomas has convinced him. In vain will Pierre d'Ailly (†1420), Gerson (†1429), and Robert (†1458) seek to follow the pseudo-Denys, St Augustine, St Bernard, Richard of St Victor, St Bonaventure, in spiritual matters and proclaim their link between speculative and mystical theology in his works *De mistrust of the Rhenish school and Ruysbroeck*; Gerson, in particular, will have posited to no purpose his thesis of the

*mystica theologia practica*¹⁵—despite the fact that the former is based on the rational powers whose object is the true, and the latter on the affective powers whose object is the good. All these writers are merely developing again in the fifteenth century the common ground of the monastic Middle Ages above the excesses of, and certainly also in reaction against, the speculation of the fourteenth century. And the movement which originated at Windesheim with Gerard Groote will ultimately prove stronger than these survivals of a past which will soon be finally over and done with.

In the Low countries and Germany, the influence of the *Devotio Moderna* quickly made itself felt. After Thomas à Kempis there are other representatives of the movement of considerable merit: the Franciscan, Henry Herp (†1477), whose eclecticism does not despise certain affinities with Ruysbroeck,¹⁶ and Jean Mombaer of Brussels (†1501). In the latter particularly a rather anxious preoccupation with the degrees of meditation and mental prayer may be discerned.

Herp and Mombaer deserve particular attention on account of the diffusion of their writings. As a result of the Spanish domination of the Low Countries, these were translated and distributed in Spain. Thus Garcia de Cisneros (†1510), in writing his well-known *Exercitatorio de la vida spiritual*, has written merely an anthology in which Thomas à Kempis, Jean Mombaer and Gerard of Zutphen figure largely.¹⁷ And through

¹⁵ cf. J. Stelzenberger, *Die mystik des Joannes Gerson*, Breslau, 1928; J. L. Connolly, *John Gerson, Reformer and Mystic*, Louvain, 1928.

¹⁶ To the extent that he has been called the 'herald of Ruysbroeck'. Yet his *Spiegel der Volkommenheit* (ed. L. Verschuere, 2 vols., Antwerp, 1931) merely translates into subjective language Ruysbroeck's speculative teaching. His doctrine is dependent on his theocentric conception of the relationship between man and God. The essential, with the help of grace, is still union with God in knowledge and, above all, in love (a Franciscan characteristic), with as its necessary complement the fulfilling of the divine will, the ascent towards which is marked by progress in renunciation, the practice of the virtues and prayer. Like the Carthusian, Hugh of Balma (thirteenth century), but in a manner which is less affective, Herp gives an important place in prayer to 'aspirations' (*toegheesten*)—a preference which goes hand in hand with a certain distrust of spiritual consolations. The latter are neither the sign of perfection nor the guarantee of divine action. This does not prevent him from recognising, above the interior active life and the contemplative life, a third life, 'superessentially contemplative' (*ouerweselic*), characterised by its gratuitousness and passivity. Note that the Franciscan primacy of love and of the imitation of Christ (*exercitia Christi formalia*) always retains its rights in this ascent, the framework of which recalls very closely that of Ruysbroeck.

¹⁷ cf. M. Alamo, *Cisneros (Garcia de)* in the *Dict. Spirit.* vol. II, pp. 910-921.

sneros, St Ignatius of Loyola comes in contact with the *Devotio Moderna*. A little later it will influence St Teresa of Avila, chiefly through the intermediary of the Spanish Franciscan, Francis of Osuna (†1540).¹⁸ Thus in its most eminent representatives, Spanish spirituality of the sixteenth century owes to the *Devotio Moderna* more than one characteristic feature. And, further, when we realise the primary influence which these Spanish mystics and spiritual writers exercised on those of later centuries, whether Spaniards or others, we see that we owe, even today, to this *Devotio Moderna*.

But, it must be repeated, if the inheritance which it has handed down to us did contain in germ the moralistic and psychological trend of our spirituality, it no longer contained, except in a relatively extrinsic way, all that constitutes the nobility of the Pauline and Johannine doctrines of the spiritual life. Before the advent of scholasticism, the Middle Ages lived on the mystical teaching of the New Testament to the depths of its being. Whilst since then this patristic and scriptural vision has not been forgotten, it is a fact that henceforward the mystical experience will be described *within the framework, with the guarantee* of these truths, much more than as the experience of such truths.

Where are we to place the origin of this cleavage? It seems to us that the end of the fourteenth century, with its speculative mysticism on the one hand and the *Devotio Moderna* on the other, gives us the exact moment.

Perhaps our contemporaries have some lessons to learn from this investigation. We are very skilled in the art of writing the story of the past and of the doctrines on which the past has lived. But are we equally skilled in following out its teachings? Are we always prepared to 'create' in the direction which the story shows us to be the true and the right one?

cf. R. de Ros, *Un maître de sainte Thérèse, le Père François d'Osuna*, Paris, 1936; P. Groult, *Les mystiques des Pays-Bas et la littérature mystique espagnole XVI siècle*, Louvain, 1927.

SOME BOOKS ABOUT THE BIBLE

BY

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.



Of all the biblical books that have appeared during recent months, the first one stands out as of particular merit among those we are describing in this note.

Gospel Gleanings, by Thomas Nicklin (Longmans; 21s.), is in fact a series of very scholarly studies of a number of points which cover most of the field of research in the subject. The sections were written at various times, and now, in the author's old age, have been gathered together into a unity. Many of Mr Nicklin's conclusions have stood the test of time, having been first stated in various articles or lectures, published, unpublished, or privately printed during the last fifty years, but they are now assembled for the study of all. And they are valuable and often new contributions. The Catholic reader is cheered to find these mature fruits of Anglican scholarship presenting the orthodox conclusions that he himself has long been taught, and presenting them with all the apparatus of recent studies. For example (p. 56), Mr Nicklin's dates for the composition of the Gospels are as follows:

- | | | |
|------|----|---|
| A.D. | 36 | St Matthew put together his Oracles |
| | 43 | St Matthew put together Q |
| | 49 | St Mark wrote his Gospel |
| | 55 | St Matthew wrote his Gospel |
| | 60 | St Luke wrote his Gospel |
| | 63 | St Luke wrote the Acts |
| | | St John, son of Zebedee, wrote both his Gospel (60 years after Christ) and the Apocalypse (pp. 72ff.) |

We find a surprising and interesting treatment of matter of the 'logia' of Matthew and of Q (by Matthew—"the reader must be asked to lay aside any theories which he has been taught to regard as established as to the character of Q"—p. 67), and repeatedly the old ideas (as the usual critical theories now are) about the Synoptics, for the last fifty years regarded

proved, have to be abandoned. The historical value of John insisted on, and his view shown precisely to be that of an old man ('middle-aged critics have sometimes forgotten this'—p. 75). The first part deals with problems of the composition of the Gospels, while the second part deals with Gospel chronology, of which some dates might be thus tabulated:

B.C.	9	Zachary on duty, Annunciation
	8	Birth of Christ (16 or 17 May)
	7	Visit of Magi
	4	Herod's death
A.D.	30	Baptism
	33	Crucifixion, Resurrection

The argumentation is from evidence in the text, compared with calendars, patristic and Roman sources, and astronomical data (e.g., planets for Magi, moons for passovers, etc., fully tabulated). Recent opinions are discussed (including Fr Sutcliffe's and Fr Corbishley's), and a most detailed chronology is worked out. The evidence and the conclusions in these parts of the book seem convincing and offer no difficulty to the Catholic student. The presentation is lucid and admirable.

The later part of the book is a study of special historical problems: the Virgin Birth, the Brethren of the Lord, etc., and here again the conclusions are orthodox (including *Post partum inviolata*). But, as in so much orthodox Anglican work, there is a mildly Arian, or perhaps only Subordinationist, flavour about certain remarks, which tend to mar the generally most satisfactory argument. For instance, that Christ learned about his birth from his mother (p. 186), that he gradually began to understand his mission (p. 215ff.), that he could read men's hearts (p. 221), that his ideas became clearer to himself (pp. 279 and 301ff.). The evidence assembled under the heads of the 'Dominical Titles' is most valuable, but much of the speculation is invalidated by an imperfect christology, though, be it said at once, there is not a speck of doubt in the author's mind about the Divinity of Christ. It may be said, therefore, that the first 180 pages can be warmly recommended, but that the remainder must be read with reservations required by an orthodox dogma of the hypostatic union.

Certain new and somewhat startling conclusions should be noted. First, on the nature of Q (pp. 20, 67), Mark's 'group-

ing' of events (p. 9), the originality of Matthew (pp. 29, 35, 53), on the Transfiguration (pp. 130ff.), that Thaddeus=Matthias (p. 206), that Christ was bilingual and in fact frequently spoke Greek (p. 275), certain Aramaic excerpts being noticed because they were not in Greek, and lastly the theories about the shuffling of leaves, dropped and misplaced, not only in St John (as Mr Nicklin had already proposed in 1933), but also in the archetype of St Mark, where some pages were lost, which accounts for the absence of those details in Luke, who had a defective copy. The matter (size of paper and all) is worked out in the case of Mark on pp. 5ff. It must remain an hypothesis, but is one which offers certain necessary explanations.

This brings us to the next book, by a Catholic: *The Gospel according to St John, arranged in its conjectured original order and translated from the Greek into current English*, by F. R. Hoare (Burns Oates, 6s. 6d.). This book follows upon the now well-known *Original Order and Chapters of St John's Gospel*, published by the same author in 1944. The earlier book worked out in detail, and most convincingly, a hypothesis according to which the leaves of the original codex of St John's Gospel got disarranged, and although several blocks of sheets remained together, others are in the wrong order. The idea originated in the observation of certain well-known disjointings in John's narrative. These, and other less obvious ones, were found to recur at certain intervals, which enabled Mr Hoare to conjecture the size of the page of the original Greek codex, and so to sort out the contents of each page (or set of pages). The conjectured order was set out in its entirety, with a full explanation of the hypothesis, in 1944, and was far more drastic a rearrangement than any previous attempt (including Mr Nicklin's). The trouble about Mr Hoare's hypothesis is that it is so convincing that it cannot be gainsaid, yet it is so hypothetical that it cannot without much hesitation be affirmed. The present volume is a translation of the rearranged text into entirely modern English (e.g., 'Get up, we must be going'), with copious notes, frequently defending the translation according to the niceties of Greek usage. Cautious readers should be told that both volumes appeared with full ecclesiastical approbation.

In the summer the Oxford University Press began to issue a new series, entitled *A Primer of Christianity*, in three volumes, with a supplementary volume. These are intended both for adults and for young people leaving school who are willing to think for themselves about the Christian Faith (pluribus). The first part has appeared: *The Beginning of the Gospel*, by T. W. Manson, which sets out to answer 'What is the Christ? and Who is the Christ?' in the terms used by the first Christians, that is, in the terms of the Gospel of St Mark, which is given *in extenso* in a new modern translation (completely modern), arranged under large paragraph headings. The translation is excellent. It is interspersed with connecting links in small type explaining the sequence of events and ideas. It is a valuable piece of work and its forthright manner (rather like St Mark's itself) should interest young people, but one has to regret the wholesale acceptance of the old critical theories about Matthew being but a revised and enlarged Mark, etc.; and remarks that sound Subordinationist, not downright Nestorian, such as the heading 'The Christ in the Mind of Jesus' (p. 22), or the statement that 'Jesus saw clearly that the clash . . . must issue in disaster for the country. And so it did in A.D. 66-70. The disciples wanted the date, but he could not give it to them.' It is indeed unfortunate that these things vitiate the carrying out of an excellent plan. The supplementary volume has also been issued: *Science, History and Faith*, by Alan Richardson (6s. 6d.). Here again the design and thesis are excellent, titles such as 'The Historical Basis of the Christian Faith', 'The Necessity of the Church', and 'God's Judgment and this World Order' are alluring. And again there is so much that is orthodox and sound, yet we find that 'the accounts of the resurrection . . . were written half a century or more after the event' (p. 57). The real proof of the resurrection of Christ is the Christian Church itself (p. 14—hardly an acceptable notion, though of course it is one of the proofs). Yet the author firmly believes in the resurrection, adding (*ibid.*) 'if the resurrection of Jesus is a fact of history, then certain philosophies must be declared inadequate: Omar Khayyám and Epicurus, Spinoza and Bertrand Russell, to mention only a few'. And Christ's Divinity is the centre of the whole of history—there is no Arianism here—and 'Christ re-

deemed human nature by assuming it' (p. 162). Membership of the Body of Christ is (quite rightly) given as the reason why people 'go to church' (p. 123), but what they do there remains unexplained. These are some of the points where the Catholic reader finds the work inadequate. The final note is good: the 'preparatory nature of this world' (p. 193) and everything ultimately converging on the life to come.

At the same time the Cambridge University Press has printed four broadcast talks of Professor C. H. Dodd: *About the Gospels* (3s. 6d.). This is a small book, a mere spark from the Professor's anvil, yet it shows us something of his thought. His concern is to represent the original audience of the Gospel, and the circumstances in which the Gospels were written. His emphasis is upon the living tradition that grew up among Christ's followers, and upon the Gospels as the first fruits of that tradition. He places the fruits, however, late: Mark was written after 64-5 (p. 2), which might be acceptable, but when Matthew is placed in 75 and Luke in 95 (p. 26), we cannot feel so sure of their historical value. John would appear as one 'soaked in the living tradition' (p. 40), rather than an eye-witness. But it is important to understand that the author places complete confidence in the veracity of the 'living tradition', at least in general, if not in every detail.

A big venture has been launched this summer, with the first issues of an 'Annotated Bible', which is to present the text of the Authorised Version with introductions and critical notes. The first two fascicules to appear are the two volumes of *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, edited by Julius A. Bewer (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 5s. each). They are attractively produced in America, where the whole series is being planned. An historical introduction on the background of the prophets precedes each group, and a short critical introduction precedes each book. The Minor Prophets are thus grouped: eighth century, Amos, Hosea, Micah; seventh century, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk; Persian period, Haggai, I Zechariah, Obadiah, Malachi, Joel; Greek period, Jonah, II Zechariah. This grouping shows the general critical attitude, which is a fairly normal one, though of course few authors can agree about the placing of Obadiah, Joel and Jonah. Zechariah is simply taken in two parts. The text is printed in lines as blank verse,

and the notes are chiefly concerned with the correction of the text, and the regular emendations now generally accepted are fully noted. The edition should prove useful as it does provide the barest minimum, and that concisely, of critical notes.

The book entitled *The Psalms, translated from the Latin Vulgate, in the light of the Hebrew, of the Septuagint and Veshitta Versions, and of the Psalterium juxta Hebraeos of Jerome, with Introductions, critical notes and spiritual reflections*, by Fr Charles Callan, O.P., was first published in America in 1944, and has become well-known. Now has appeared a new edition, accommodated to the new Latin Vulgate, simply entitled *The New Psalter of Pius XII in Latin and English, with Introductions, notes and spiritual reflections*. The change is interesting: there is now no need for critical notes or comparison with the old versions. The general introduction, the particular introductions to each psalm, explaining the general meaning, and the spiritual reflections remain unchanged from the previous edition. There is no doubt that this is a most helpful book for anyone who uses the New Psalter, as its predecessor was to all who used the Vulgate Psalms. The New Psalter is largely self-explanatory, and so is Fr Callan's new translation. A sample would not be amiss (Ps. 125, 1-3):

Old Psalter

When the Lord changed the
bondage of Sion, we were as if
dreaming.

Then was our mouth filled with
joy, and our tongue with songs
of rejoicing.

Then was it said among the hea-
then: 'The Lord has done
great things for them'.

Yea, the Lord has done great
things for us; we are glad.

New Psalter

When the Lord brought back the
captives of Sion, we were as if
dreaming.

Then was our mouth filled with
laughter, and our tongue with
exultant joy.

Then said they among the hea-
then: 'The Lord has done
greatly for them'.

Yea, the Lord has done great
things for us; we are made
glad!

It is useful to have the two translations by the same person, and both in the same literal style. The new edition must have been prepared only just before Fr Callan's death in 1949 at the age of seventy-two. He was a distinguished scholar and a

consultor of the Biblical Commission. The book is published by Wagner of New York, but issued in London by Herders at 45s.

Two other books should be noticed, which are special studies of a narrower biblical field. The first is the first issue of a new series to be published by the Student Christian Movement Press 'planned to further the study of biblical theology within the Church': *Studies in Biblical Theology*, No. 1, *Baptism in the New Testament*, by Oscar Cullman (6s.). This is a translation (good) of *Die Tauflehre des Neuen Testaments*, published by the Zwingli-Verlag, Zürich. It is in fact a preoccupation with a particular problem in Protestant theology: the precise meaning of baptism and the legitimacy or otherwise of infant-baptism, and was called forth by the controversy among German and Swiss Protestants that followed upon the recent book of Karl Barth on baptism, in which he condemns infant-baptism, calling the practice a wound 'in the body of the Church' (cf. p. 27). Herr Cullman felt that the case for infant-baptism had not been adequately defended even among Anglo-Saxon Baptists, and that the whole matter needed to be studied on the background of the New Testament. This is the matter of his book. Similar ground (with a less particular preoccupation, but with more anxiety about the validity of the New Testament evidence) was covered by the Methodist W. F. Flemington in *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (S.P.C.K., 1948).

The other special study is *The Bible and Polygamy*, by Geoffrey Parrinder (S.P.C.K., 2s. 6d.). The question may seem remote, but becomes less so when we realise that in Africa there are no less than eight hundred independent 'African Churches', nearly all of which have gone into schism from the established missionary churches on the matter of polygamy (p. 2). It is in Africa above all that the problem exists, and it is one of the great obstacles to Christianity there. Among Islamic peoples it is now much less general. Reasons for the African's incorrigible polygamy are suggested, and their usual gibe that it is found in the Old Testament is investigated. It appears that monogamy in Israel was a gradual growth from prophetic times and is taken for granted in the later books (Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, Song of Songs—important evidence

is—Psalms and Proverbs) (p. 29). By the time of the New Testament monogamy was regular among both the Jews and the Greeks (p. 42). One of the great contributions of Christianity was the dignity of womanhood, and a study is made of the Christian idea of celibacy. At the end (p. 71) an interesting modern example is given of the 'free love' in Soviet Russia, which was destroying itself and had to be curbed by law in 1936. This small book is an interesting guide in a comparatively untrodden area of biblical lore.

Lastly, certain works have been completed, and we should welcome the appearance of the second volume of Professor Aage Bentzen's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, published in Denmark, but issued in England by Geoffrey Cumberlege, 30s. The first volume appeared in 1949 (reviewed by the writer in *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, February, 1950). The author is primarily interested in what he terms the 'formal and cultic implications' in the history of literature. The first volume dealt mainly with the literary forms in the Old Testament, while here the study is worked out in the particular books. Much space is devoted to the latest developments of the documentary hypotheses in pentateuchal studies, and it is valuable to have them clearly stated, with a detailed account of their growth. Professor Bentzen has no uneasiness in assigning the completion of the Pentateuch to the year 400 (p. 72), and represents the present-day heirs of the older critical school. Another valuable book, the second volume of which has recently appeared, is the *Greek and Latin Text of the New Testament*, by Dr H. J. Vogels (Herder, Freiburg i.B., n.p.). The first volume (Gospels and Acts) appeared in 1949 (reviewed by the writer in *LIFE OF THE SPIRIT*, March, 1950), and the second volume completes the New Testament. It is a new critical text by a Catholic scholar from Bonn. It will stand with the usual modern critical texts of (for instance) Nestle or Souter. Dr Vogels in his foreword said that the very format of his book shows his debt to Nestle, but he works on a different principle of selection of readings: his main determining factor is not the witness of particular isolated codices, however ancient (though of course he gives their readings), for their very fewness may easily produce an erroneous text; rather he would accept the *consensus* of the early writers and especially

the ancient versions. In other words, he would place the traditional reading, when there is some unanimity, before a discordant reading which happens to be found in a particular codex. This is indeed a valuable contribution to the study of the Greek Testament text, and one is glad that the work has now been completed. The Vulgate text alongside the Greek is the Clementine text, with the readings of Wordsworth-White in the apparatus.

Last of all we should notice a reprint, for the fact that *Letters to Young Churches*, a new translation into entirely modern English of all the Epistles by the Rev. J. P. Phillips, first published in 1947, was reprinted for the fourth time in 1949 (Geoffrey Bles, 10s. 6d.), is a notable indication of its popularity. It was a daring experiment, and one must admit that on the whole it has succeeded. A single example, from a difficult passage (Eph. 1, 4-6):

Consider what He has done—before the foundation of the world He chose us to become, in Christ, His holy and blameless children living within His constant care. He planned, in His purpose of love, that we should be adopted as His own children through Jesus Christ—that we might learn to praise that glorious generosity of His which has made us welcome to the everlasting love He bears towards the Son.

In 'everyday' passages the style is much more colloquial (II Cor. 11, 33):


'I escaped by climbing through a window and being let down the wall in a basket. That's the sort of dignified exist I can boast about.'

Probably Mr Phillips's version is about as far as the experiment can go, but it is good to know that it is being read.

RELIGIOUS SISTERS

BY

FERDINAND VALENTINE, O.P.

 HIS book¹ is an important contribution to the literature of the spiritual and religious life; how important we shall discuss presently. The Foreword tells us that it is a translation of papers read at the *Journées d'Etudes* by a number of priests, secular and regular, which were later arranged by the Editor of *La Vie Spirituelle* for the benefit of French religious sisters and published in two volumes under the titles *Directoire des Supérieures* and *Les Adaptations de la Vie Religieuse*. The former was intended for superiors and the latter for religious women in general. The translation is presented in one volume, with certain modifications of the original which are indicated in the text, and the addition of a very helpful chapter by an English doctor, R. E. Lavard, M.D.

There can be little doubt that a book of this kind, which touches many present-day problems with wisdom and courage, is long overdue. Many religious orders and congregations of women are going through a very difficult time. In what degree this is due to a shifting of priorities in the needs of the world-postulate under the influence of the Holy Spirit is a question to one can answer. Something of the kind is undoubtedly happening, so that in some places our novitiates are full to overflowing and in others vocations are few, and many of those who are joining leave during their novitiate and even later. But in any view the over-all picture of the English scene is not as similar to the present low level of the French novitiates as this book seems to imply; and some of our British convents have already forestalled its learned contributors, many of whose commendations and adaptations have already been put into practice. The value of this book will be to show many of our

Religious Sisters. Being the English version of *Directoire des Supérieures* and *Adaptations de la Vie Religieuse*. By various authors (Blackfriars; 15s.)

own sisters what is already being done by an increasing minority of our own convents under stress of modern needs and conditions rather than to provide an example of what is being done in France for our enlightenment and imitation. Our sisters should, of course, have the courage to learn from their contemporaries abroad, but in my opinion the Church would greatly benefit if the reverse were also true.

This does not mean that a spirit of mediocrity has not descended upon many of our British religious institutions. There is no gainsaying this fact. And to such convents this book will be an enormous help and will show them how to adapt themselves without compromising with the spirit of the world on the one hand and without inclining to a dangerous spiritual isolationism on the other. The truth seems to be, in England at any rate, that the chief danger confronting us is ignorance, and that the more successfully we can dispel this ignorance the more clearly shall we see that a full, fervent, and uncompromising dedication to our religious ideals is precisely what is needed in these difficult days. This truth has to be brought home to our sisters; and here at hand is a book specially designed for this purpose, provided it is used in the right way. It enlightens, not by confronting us with new, 'modern' ideals, but by giving us the vision to see the old truths and principles in a new way against the background of present-day needs. In that sense is it an 'adaptation'.

The subjects treated fall into five parts: The first deals with The Theology of the Religious Life. This is concerned mainly with the vows—Poverty, Chastity and Obedience—and their corresponding virtues, and with observances, prayer and the liturgical life. The chapter on the Vow of Chastity by Dom Massabki, O.S.B., in this section calls for special mention, and is extremely well done. The second and third parts of the book are for religious superiors, the first treating of their office and the second of the knowledge they require in the wise fulfilment of their duties. The chapter on Psychology in this section contributed by Doctor Hava'd is particularly to be recommended. The fourth part deals with the Vocation and Training of Religious, and the fifth with Adaptations in Modern Religious Life, which contains a very helpful contribution from the pen of a Carmelite Father, Victor de la Vierge.

This is indeed a wise book and written by able men of such experience that it might seem almost impertinent for a reviewer to offer any criticism, though in a sense I think the criticism I have in mind will enhance its value rather than otherwise. Let me admit at the outset that the illustrious contributors have recognised that the only satisfactory method of teaching religious subjects is through the enlightenment of their superiors. For instance, Père Plé writes in his Preface: 'Superiors are generally elected or appointed without any specific preparation and this inevitably increases the burden of their office that is already a weighty one, as well as a particularly delicate one in the present contingency. We thought, therefore, that it might serve a useful purpose to produce a book which would enable them to review and co-ordinate their knowledge of the religious life, while at the same time acquiring the data indispensable to the discharge of their office.' This promise has been most generously fulfilled. But we have to ask ourselves two questions: Will superiors read it; and having read it, what means are at their disposal of passing on their knowledge to their subjects? I am not suggesting for a moment that superiors would or could boycott this book; the very suggestion is absurd. But the fact must be faced that many religious sisters do not assimilate truth very easily through the printed word; and for this reason it is time we recognised that something has gone wrong with the learning-process in our religious orders of women, and that, for this, we priests must shoulder the main burden of responsibility. In our conferences and retreats we flog outworn methods when something fresh is called for. We so overburden our sisters with work that all mental integration, under existing conditions, becomes well-nigh impossible, and we then fail to provide for them those mental situations through which alone knowledge can be acquired. One would normally expect our sisters to revitalise their own minds, and so be able to adapt themselves to the demands of the modern apostolate. It is only our neglect as priests which makes a book like *Religious Sisters* now necessary as a part-solution of the problem. The root trouble with our sisters is mental stagnation.

Let me repeat. The authors of this book are quite aware of this—particularly Père de la Vierge (pp. 175 seq.)—but as

it is the cardinal problem it should, to my mind, have been dealt with more specifically. It is perilous, indeed, when our sisters have everything in common and yet are unable to learn how to develop a common mentality; when they discuss, and are eager to discuss, everything with the sole exception of the life they are living and the principles governing it. We cannot instil knowledge into the minds of others; we can only provide the conditions and the inspiration for its acquisition; of its nature knowledge is the fruit of an immanent mental activity. It is useless to write books for our sisters unless they are provided with the means of assimilating the ideas they contain; and for this, some sort of discussion is essential. There is no other way of presenting truth relative to the apperceptive powers of the individual sisters. Conferences, whether given in retreat or out of it, are inadequate. The religious life of our sisters awaits some method of instruction akin to the tutorial system in our universities. In other words, spiritual discussions should figure largely in every retreat we give and wherever possible be substituted for spiritual reading. If this could be insisted upon by higher authority and discreetly regulated by local superiors, as in fact is now being done in some of our convents, then every sister could be inspired to think and to reflect, and encouraged both to contribute to and to profit by the knowledge of others.

It has been said that this innovation will mean a major revolution in some of our institutions. Perhaps so. It is never easy to dig people out of an accepted mode of life; but it must be done, and done quickly. As I have indicated, this adaptation has already been devised and accepted with ever-increasing fruit by some of our own convents, and here as in other ways our sisters are pioneers. But it should be accepted by all. And as a text-book to help in these discussions, and to avoid error, I know of nothing comparable to the book now under review.

One final suggestion: to publish a book of this calibre without an index is surely a mistake. The reader is often plagued by the thought that this or that might usefully have been said, only to find that it is said later on. In such circumstances an index is imperative. Is it still too late to provide one?

SANCTITY

A REPLY TO SOME OPINIONS RECENTLY EXPRESSED IN 'LIFE OF THE SPIRIT'

Sir,—Isn't it time LIFE OF THE SPIRIT threw open its windows wide to the subject of Sanctity?

You invite a postcard's worth of comments and suggestions; and Mr Donald Nicholl's article in the September issue sends me searching for not one postcard but a whole packet!

St Benedict talks about the ladder of perfection. I heard one of the monks recently warn us of the antics made by 'spiritual' people in the attempt to climb a ladder which is not there. 'Spirituality' is a difficult and dangerous subject to write about; its very nature excludes such material things as words. But to begin to differentiate between 'lay' and 'religious' spirituality really makes one's head spin—and I fear in a quite literal and topical sense it makes me feel red.

'The urgent need', writes Mr Nicholl, 'is for lay spirituality written for lay men and women. At present lay persons wishing to intensify their spiritual life by reading, have little choice but to read works written by religious, and dealing specifically with the problems of life in an Order. Helpful as such reading always proves, *the effect of transferring its applications to the difficulties facing, say, grocers and shop-stewards, inevitably produces a sense of unreality.*' (Italics mine.) It is necessary in fairness to Mr Nicholl to read this sentence in the context of the whole article, but it touches on a theme which he himself deplores and which we look to LIFE OF THE SPIRIT to do its utmost to straighten out: namely, this very cleavage between 'religion' and 'the world'. It is a pity that while recognising the powerful and harmful influence . . . still exercised by the assumption that there stretches an unbridgeable gulf between the world and the saints', Mr Nicholl seems, in the sentence already quoted, to stay away still more from the banks of the gulf.

Or does he?

Is the 'sense of unreality' the outcome of an unreality actually existing in the spirituality of many 'spiritual writers'?

In other words, have we gradually evolved a sort of spiritual class-distinction with two different sets of values, so that the grocers and shop-stewards find themselves faced with an altogether different path to holiness from that of a monk or nun?

One is sometimes tempted to wish that a modern Savonarola could make a vast bonfire of the vanities of 'spiritual writers', and

send us back to the Scriptures and the works of the early Fathers and Doctors before 'religious life' had crystallised so disastrously as it has. But then we should miss the genius of St Teresa of the Child Jesus of Lisieux, who put into one phrase what I am trying to spill over my packet of postcards. Her sister remarked on the struggles she must have been through to attain to such a degree of perfection as they saw in her. 'Oh, it is not *that*!' she replied. 'Holiness does not consist in this or that practice. *It consists in a disposition of the heart*, which make us always humble in God's hands, well aware of our weakness but audaciously confident in his fatherly goodness.'

What is the difference there, between 'lay' and 'religious' spirituality?

We are all people—human beings contending with the same setback of original sin. If God calls some by an act of his own choice to dedicate their lives exclusively to his worship, they have a greater responsibility to share its fruitfulness with their fellow men. A strategist's business is to direct the soldiers in the firing-line; a doctor's, to use his science for the healing of his sick brethren; that of a priest or religious, to offer the fruits of his theology and contemplation to his fellow Christians in the stress of the world. If there is a difference between 'lay' and 'religious' spirituality it must be somebody's fault for befogging the issues. Does the smile of the milkman belong to a different class of virtue from St Teresa's smile to the peevish old invalid after cutting her bread for tea?

In the refectory of an enclosed convent, *The Story of a Family* was read aloud, with great profit and edification to the nuns, because in spite of its tiresomely pedantic and moralising style it is of great documentary value as the true story of a saintly family. There is a tendency to forget that monks and nuns were born and brought up in ordinary human families, and that nowadays they share the common penalty of mankind in their bondage to forms, permits, controls and the rest of the bureaucratic diseases, demanding the practice of the same virtues of patience and mortification—or of fortitude in resistance to oppressive State-slavery.

Mr Nicholl wants lay writers of spiritual guidance. Has he not read the works of Dietrich von Hildebrand—in particular his *In Defence of Purity*, which, written by a married man, gives a clearer and more sublime teaching on virginity as the transcendence of sex than anything the present writer has come across in many years of spiritual reading? Is he ignorant too of the writings of that illustrious and saintly layman Friedrich von Hügel, of Eric Gill, Jacques Maritain, Margaret Yeo, the two Sheeds and their own rising genera-

n, to name but a tiny group? We have surely never been so rich in lay writers, who are by no means a class apart from 'religious' spirituality. The novices in the same enclosed convent are instructed in Sheed's *Theology and Sanctity*, to their own delight as well as their mistress's.

To each according to his need; from each according to his capacity.' May we plead for a truly Christian policy of 'levelling' in the widest sense of leading us all together to the Heart of Christ? Let us, as St Thomas advises, care not *by whom* anything is said but consider *what* is said. To many of your readers, the writers of articles are simply a name; if the Christian name is not given, we have no idea whether they are priests, religious men or women or laymen or women. That is excellent. The confusion around the subject of contemplation was superbly cleared away in the first issue of 1950 by 'John Corson', who may be an Abbot or the father of a family for all we know—he certainly understands how to present his subject.

It is to be hoped that Mr Nicholl speaks over-pessimistically of the rarity of happy marriages and happy families. If his experience has been of the tragedies, mine has equally been of a far greater proportion of happy unions. But the lack of *sanctity* in marriage could seem to come from an extraordinary lack of any such understanding as von Hildebrand gives in the first part of the book quoted above. He is pointing out the highest ideal, which will only be reached by a few; many, alas, will regard it as an exaggerated idealism. But masterpieces of art are often unpleasing to the untrained critic—and God's masterpieces, the Saints, must appear exaggerated to those content with a lesser degree of union with him. Is it not the work of religious as much as of layfolk to keep this high ideal before the world? And can we not all in our own proper spheres be 'edified' in the literal sense, i.e., 'built up' in our spiritual life, by the virtue we recognise in each other?

There is a story—a Bedouin yarn with a moral—that tells of a king who sent his Grand Vizier to spy out a city he wanted to take. The Vizier in disguise went to a shop and asked for bread. The baker assured him that *his* bread was stale, whereas his neighbour would give him the freshest, whitest bread. Every other shop was the same: fruit, vegetables were not up to much here—try my brother over there. . . . The Vizier returned to the King to advise against his intention. Ten years later the experiment was repeated. This time the vendors eagerly offered their wares as the best in the world—*far* superior to any other in the city. The Vizier now urged the King to

make war; he would easily capture the city, for the inhabitants were no longer of one heart.

Another story takes the last of my postcards. In it, the Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a marriage-feast which a king made for his son. When all was ready the invitations were sent out . . . and refused. Eventually the empty places were filled with the down-and-outs from the highways and hedges. Only one of the guests was thrown out, not having on a wedding garment. We are not told whether he was an ecclesiastic, a religious or a layman. Presumably the missing garment would have covered his robes, habit, or evening dress. In the Kingdom of Heaven there would be no distinction.—

Yours faithfully,

‘A MOTHER OF FIFTEEN.’

P.S.—Since writing the above, the following fact has been related to me, and guaranteed as true:

Some years ago in a Carthusian monastery, two lay brothers were re-opening a grave for the burial of a monk who had just died. Their spades hit on an incorrupt body. (Charterhouse poverty excludes coffins.) One of the brothers fled to the Prior with the astounding news. ‘Fill in that grave and start on the next one’, was the unemotional reply.

Which explains the scarcity of Carthusian canonisations.

CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor, LIFE OF THE SPIRIT

Sir,—Will you allow me to make a few points in answer to Q.S.’s letter in your October issue on an organisation for the contemplative life in the world?

1. Surely everyone sincerely trying to lead a truly Christian life is ‘guided in a very special way by the Holy Spirit’; but this does not preclude their joining a particular organisation, whether in the world or in the cloister, to obtain the help that comes from a common aim and rule.

2. This rule, it is true, would have to be more elastic for lay people than the rules for cloistered communities; but the rules of the approved Secular Institutes, for example, have such elasticity as to enable members to pursue their different callings in the world.

3. ‘Lay contemplatives’ should not be negatively defined as frustrated religious vocations, but positively as pronounced vocations to a contemplative life in the world, suited for it by temperament and circumstances. . . . The main purpose of bringing them together would be to give each other mutual support and the life itself greater efficiency. A group of them would do much to prevent ‘crankiness’ (a very acute danger in such a life) and to bring greater force and vigour to the contemplative apostolate.—Yours, etc., S.W.

REVIEWS

WATERS OF SILENCE. By Thomas Merton. (Hollis & Carter; 15s.)

Waters of Silence follows as a welcome sequel to *Elected Silence* and shows considerable advance in style and depth. It is a true sequel, for, although it is impersonal, whereas *Elected Silence* was in its very nature personal from cover to cover, *Waters of Silence* introduces the reader to the great monastic tradition that Thomas Merton inherited when he crossed the threshold of Gethsemani. It tells us what he found within the Abbey walls.

It would be misleading to classify this work strictly as monastic history. It is more than that. Certainly, by far the greater number of its pages are historical, telling of the Cistercians, particularly those of America, but the most valuable passages in the book are those that describe and explain the monk's life in itself. To convince oneself of this, let the reader turn to the second and the thirteenth chapters.

The book opens with a very brief introduction to the monastic life before and after St Benedict. From that it passes to a far more detailed description of the early Cistercians and their way of life. We are then hurried from that golden age through sadder times, to the first American foundations. These are treated in great detail. Indeed, but for the free, unaffected style that makes the whole such pleasant reading, there might have been a danger that too much detail would have been a burden to this part of the book, robbing it of its interest for the general, non-American reader. That danger has happily been avoided.

The ninth chapter, with its story of the reunion of the Cistercian congregations in 1892, gives an answer to the question one so often asks: 'Who are Trappists? How do they differ from Cistercians?' The following chapter tells of the troubles of the Order through the two world wars, while the persecution of the monks in Spain and China is given the full treatment so glorious a page of the Cistercian annals deserves.

The concluding chapter of the book stands out as its finest section. It is more than a treatise on the monastic ideal as Cistercians try to realise it; it is a justification and a challenge. Let one quotation suffice:

To view the monastic life merely as a school of individual perfection would be a serious diminution of the Cistercian ideal. The monastery does not exist just to form individual saints and contemplatives, but to form one Saint, one Contemplative, who is the mystical Body of the monastery itself. Each monk contributes to

the spiritual perfection of the whole by the purity of his contemplation and by the sanctity of his life: if God has made him a contemplative and a saint, it is, ultimately, that he might so contribute. Needless to say, the monastery is only a member in the great Mystical Body of the Church. Therefore in the long run, the purity of heart produced in each monk by the monastic rule, by obedience, humility, labour, charity, solitude, recollection and prayer adds to the sanctity of the whole Church.'

That is a justification because it reminds us how the contemplative monastic life draws its power, indeed, the very reason for its existence, from the most profound principle of the Gospel revelation, our sanctification through the Mystical Body of Christ. It is a challenge, because it calls back every Cistercian, every monk, to a more generous co-operation with his strictly contemplative vocation.

This whole chapter is enriched with quotations from St Bernard. The doctrine here may not be new, but it is presented in a way that makes it live for us as only great spiritual truths can live. Perhaps the most important teaching in this valuable book is the exposition of the Common Will, the *voluntas communis*, that is the secret and strength of community life. Surely, for the monk, life lived in common with his brethren becomes sacramental.

To conclude, Thomas Merton has succeeded in this book of monastic history because he has gone far deeper than the mere narration of historical facts. He has entered into a full understanding of what monasticism really is. So he has qualified in the one way necessary for his difficult task.

BRUNO WALKER, O.C.R.

RM. By R. A. Nicholson. (Allen & Unwin; 8s. 6d.)

In a posthumous publication the learned world and the general public are now offered the last work of England's finest Persian scholar, Professor R. A. Nicholson; in proportion to its scope and size, it may well prove his most effective. It consists of 119 translations, in verse and free-verse, of representative passages from the writings of Persia's greatest mystical poet, Jalâl al-Din Rûmî, all but a handful of them being from his *opus magnum*, the *Mathnawî* or *Couplet-Poem*, as it is commonly called without any necessity for closer identification; it was to the preparation of an edition, a translation and a commentary on this work that Nicholson devoted the greater part of his working life, and the result of his labours is universally conceded to be one of the most perfect achievements of English Orientalist scholarship. The passages selected here, all more or less substantially refashioned as against his renderings in the translation of the complete work, are in most cases provided, though

er overladen, with penetrating annotation, which point, amplify and integrate the particular aspect of Sûfî doctrine or imagery involved. There is a short and lucid introduction, based on Nicholson's notes as found by his literary executor, an old pupil and friend, Professor Arberry, who has also added two paragraphs of his own. Of the consummate scholarship of the translations I am enabled to give emphatic testimony: the quality and style of the renderings, too, while doubtless they will strike many as (like their author) somewhat too gentle and unassuming, are in fact the perfect means to focus the poet's meaning, without distortion or false colour. It is a rare good fortune which brings forth a work of this kind, practically selective as it is, as the maturest fruit of the master's long and patient cultivation; too often such productions are the hasty boilers of a scholar's callower years.

In the long run, the book only gains in value from its author's judicious avoidance of all comparisons between Eastern and Western mystics and his policy of allowing one of the greatest of the former to give evidence in his own behalf. With this valid document on which to work, the Christian and Catholic will have no difficulty in drawing his own comparisons and contrasts and discovering what for him must be the essential blind-spots of Sûfîsm: the inability to distinguish God from his creation and the failure to recognise mystical experience as utterly and sheerly of grace. From my own experience of Professor Nicholson and his work, I doubt that he ever clearly saw the awful gulf which (but for God's grace) separates between the Islamic and the Christian mystic, or that, if he did, he would have seen it as of the Muslim's own unwitting making. The application to the *Mathnawî* itself of some words used by Dante in his introduction, p. 25), do nothing to dispel my doubts: Rûmî's 'state of felicity' was fully attainable in this world; Dante's is secure in the walls of the *Civitas Dei*, and death is the portal of entry there.

The book is the first of the new 'Oxford' series of *Ethical and Religious Classics of East and West*, and no series could wish a better auguration. Catholics may well be justified in feeling an unusual optimism over the future publications of this series, too, for the general Introduction to the whole project contains a sentiment unusual enough in ventures of this kind: 'Those whose own religion is dogmatic have often been as ready to learn from other teachings as those who are liberals in religion'.

G. M. WICKENS.

EXTRACTS

MORALISM from time to time needs to be attacked rigorously; for no matter how strongly and theologically its errors are exposed, there will always be that tendency among the devout to reduce Christian life to a matter of good behaviour. Père G. Dirks, S.J., has taken up the perennial struggle in an article on Religious Moralism in the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique* (July-September), and after wisely warning us against the danger of exaggeration in these matters sets out to show deficiencies of this attitude. The true Christian should live the life of charity; the moralist is always considering the question of obligation.

The continual desire to satisfy exactly the duties of a christian often develops into legalistic preoccupations, 'juridical' restlessness which ends sometimes in scruple. . . . Confronted with any action the first question becomes Can I, or Ought I? Is there a duty or a prohibition? A real obligation or no? From this we can understand how such christians come to find the essence of christian life in the observance of law. And certainly we find among such men remarkable specimens of the faithful servant even to the pitch of heroism and men who mould themselves into outstanding examples of justice, honesty, and energy. But alas not rarely such admirable men are persuaded that to be thus honest and strong to the end despite the seductions of self-interest and passion is due to themselves alone. They admit that the grace of God is a useful help, but they do not regard it as indispensable. Père Dirks suggests that though such men often achieve great results, these remain within the natural order. They need the Holy Spirit with his gifts and an outpouring of generosity and love to lead them out of themselves, to reach to God himself without thought of reward in St Bernard's phrase quoted here: *Non sine praemio diligitur, sed absque intuitu praemii*.

SILENCE and the solitude of the Carthusian occupied the major part of the October *Vie Spirituelle*. The article on Carthusian asceticism by a member of that Order will appear later in LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, but there are other good things recalled in the solitude and silence of a Carthusian cell:

In short it is verily a new universe that opens before the eyes of the solitary in the depths of his contemplative repose. And yet this solitude is full too of a very vital spirit of fraternal charity. And this is surely the point of the Carthusian as a model to the world. His silence and his solitude are not anti-social, nor mere escapism. They are, as another writer in the same issue points out, the garden in which all the virtues grow and flourish, especially the virtue of charity. Fr Egan in the autumn number of *Cross and Crown* discusses

s from St Teresa's point of view. The Carmelite would be expected seek the same seclusion for her contemplation, but at the request obedience the contemplative, having given herself to God, will e herself to God's creatures.

The soul (in solitude) seems to live in greater purity because here are fewer opportunities of offending God.' Now that seems like a very valid reason for preferring solitude and prayer. St Teresa admits its validity, but only in part. She surprises us by pointing out another side of the picture: 'It is here (in the active life) that love must be made known: not in secret places, but in the midst of temptations . . .' Nevertheless she adds an important warning: 'Remember in all I say I am taking for granted that you run the risks under obedience and out of charity. If it is not so my conclusion is always that it is better to be alone: moreover *we ought to desire to be alone* even when employed in the way I am speaking of.'

is the great difficulty over again of preserving the spirit of silence der the demands of active charity and the apostolate that makes e Carthusian vocation so indispensable. Dominican contemplation, r example, which has to be ready to overcome the racket of the world with the voice of the Word, rests necessarily on silence. 'Belle Ceremonie' du Silence is the subject of an article in *ance Dominicaine* (September-October) recalling that tertiaries o must seek to observe this beautiful rule—charity must be the le as to when to speak and when to keep silent.

ODERN PROBLEMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE is the general title given to a ost outstanding double number of *Vita Christiana* (July-October), which the energetic and cheerful Editor, Padre Colosio, O.P., has own that Italy is not far behind France in appreciation of urgent tualities. Indeed, *La Vie Spirituelle*, which inspired this number d from which some of the articles are translated, could hardly ve done better. These two hundred pages may almost be regarded a *Status Questionis* for the Roman gathering called by the Sacred ongregation for Religious for the end of November to study the problems of religious life. There are articles here on Religious Life ith references to its decadences, to the priesthood, to the monastic ate, to the modern mentality, to its immediate problems, and to ecial forms such as secular institutes and lay brothers. Amid this ealth of interest we can select here only the question of Secular nstitutes. After pointing out the special needs of the present age hich have called forth the secular institutes, the author of this rticle outlines their characteristics—the full profession of Christian rfection according to the evangelical councils, the 'secularity' hich establishes them in the world, and the special nature of a

community. The spirituality of these Institutes depends on the complete consecration of the members to God, which preserves them from the 'heresy of activism', and this consecration is fulfilled in the apostolate in the world which gives each member a tremendous responsibility for personal sanctity among their own kith and kin, building up the sanctification of others upon the human ties which bind them to the world. Finally the author remarks that members may be either priests or layfolk:

Naturally what has been said will apply to priests and to the laity in an analogical way. The layman is a secular in so far as he is dedicated to professional, political action, etc., the priest in so far as he is diocesan. In the one as in the other the consecration realised in the Secular Institute finds its concrete objective in the respective activity of the apostolate in the world.

This underlining of the possibility of members of the secular priesthood consecrating themselves in such an Institute is surely new to the literature of Secular Institutes and one that is full of promise.

ALSO OF NOTE: The Assumption in tradition and in its practical 'actuality' is treated in *America* (October 28th) and *Vie Spirituelle* (November).•

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